

THE
METHODIST MAGAZINE.

FOR JULY, 1818.

DIVINITY.

EVIDENCES OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION,

Extracted from the new Edinburgh Encyclopædia.

(Continued from page 209.)

74. **I**F Christianity be not true, then the first Christians must have been mistaken as to the subject of their testimony. This supposition is destroyed by the nature of the subject. It was not testimony to a doctrine, which might deceive the understanding. It was something more than testimony to a dream, or a trance, or a midnight fancy, which might deceive the imagination. It was testimony to a multitude, and a succession of palpable facts, which could never have deceived the senses, and which preclude all possibility of mistake, even though it had been the testimony only of one individual. But when in addition to this we consider, that it is the testimony not of one, but of many individuals; that it is a story repeated in a variety of forms, but substantially the same; that it is the concurring testimony of different eye-witnesses, or the companions of eye-witnesses—we may, after this, take refuge in the idea of falsehood and collusion, but it is not to be admitted, that those eight different writers of the New Testament, could have all blundered the matter with such method, and such uniformity.

75. We know that, in spite of the magnitude of their sufferings, there are infidels who, driven from the second part of the alternative, have recurred to the first, and have affirmed, that the glory of establishing a new religion, induced the first Christians to assert, and to persist in asserting, what they knew to be

a falsehood. But (though we should be anticipating the last branch of the argument) they forget, that we have the concurrence of two parties to the truth of Christianity, and that it is the conduct only of one of the parties, which can be accounted for by the supposition in question. The two parties are the teachers and the taught. The former may aspire to the glory of founding a new faith; but what glory did the latter propose to themselves from being the dupes of an imposition so ruinous to every earthly interest, and held in such low and disgraceful estimation by the world at large? Abandon the teachers of Christianity to every imputation, which infidelity, on the rack for conjectures to give plausibility to its system, can desire; how shall we explain the concurrence of its disciples? There may be a glory in leading, but we see no glory in being led. If Christianity were false, and Paul had the effrontery to appeal to his five hundred living witnesses, whom he alleges to have seen Christ after his resurrection; the submissive acquiescence of his disciples remains a very inexplicable circumstance. The same Paul, in his epistles to the Corinthians, tells them that some of them had the gift of healing, and the power of working miracles; and that the sign of an apostle had been wrought among them in wonders and mighty deeds. A man aspiring to the glory of an accredited teacher, would never have committed himself on a subject, where his falsehood could have been so readily exposed. And in the veneration with which we know his epistles to have been preserved by the church of Corinth, we have not merely the testimony of their writer to the truth of the Christian miracles, but the testimony of a whole people who had no interest in being deceived.

76. Had Christianity been false, the reputation of its first teachers lay at the mercy of every individual among the numerous proselytes which they had gained to their system. It may not be competent for an unlettered peasant to detect the absurdity of a doctrine; but he can at all times lift his testimony against a fact, said to have happened in his presence, and under the observation of his senses. Now it so happens, that in a number of the epistles, there are allusions or express intimations of the miracles that had been wrought in the different churches to which these epistles are addressed. How comes it, if it be all a fabrication, that it was never exposed? We know that some of the disciples were driven by the terrors of persecuting vio-

lence to resign their profession. How should it happen, that none of them ever attempted to vindicate their apostacy, by laying open the artifice and insincerity of their Christian teachers? We may be sure that such a testimony would have been highly acceptable to the existing authorities of that period. The Jews would have made the most of it; and the vigilant and discerning officers of the Roman government would not have failed to turn it to account. The mystery would have been exposed and laid open, and the curiosity of latter ages would have been satisfied as to the wonderful and unaccountable steps, by which a religion could make such head in the world, though it rested its whole authority on facts; the falsehood of which was accessible to all who were at the trouble to enquire about them. But no! We hear of no such testimony from the apostates of that period. We read of some, who, agonised at the reflection of their treachery, returned to their first profession, and expiated by martyrdom, the guilt which they felt they had incurred by their dereliction of the truth. This furnishes a strong example of the power of conviction, and when we join with it, that it is conviction in the integrity of those teachers, who appealed to miracles which had been wrought among them, it appears to us a testimony in favour of our religion which is altogether irresistible.

77. IV. But this brings us to the last division of the argument, viz. that the leading facts in the history of the gospel are corroborated by the testimony of others.

78. The evidence we have already brought forward for the antiquity of the New Testament, and the veneration in which it was held from the earliest ages of the church, is an implied testimony of all Christians to the truth of the gospel history. By proving the authenticity of St. Paul's epistles to the Corinthians, we not merely establish his testimony to the truth of the Christian miracles; we establish the additional testimony of the whole church of Corinth, who would never have respected these epistles, if Paul had ventured upon a falsehood so open to detection, as the assertion, that miracles were wrought among them, which not a single individual ever witnessed. By proving the authenticity of the New Testament at large, we secure, not merely that argument which is founded on the testimony and concurrence of those immense multitudes, who in distant countries submitted to the New Testament as the rule of their faith. The testimony of the teachers, whether we take into considera-

tion the subject of that testimony, or the circumstances under which it was delivered, is of itself a stronger argument for the truth of the gospel history than can be alleged for the truth of any other history which has been transmitted down to us from ancient times. The concurrence of the taught carries along with it a host of additional testimonies, which gives an evidence to the evangelical story, that is altogether unexampled. On a point of ordinary history, the testimony of Tacitus is held decisive, because it is not contradicted. The history of the New Testament is not only not contradicted, but confirmed by the strongest possible expressions which men can give of their acquiescence in its truth; by thousands who were either agents or eye-witnesses of the transactions recorded, who could not be deceived, who had no interest, and no glory to gain by supporting a falsehood, and who, by their sufferings in the cause of what they professed to be their belief, gave the highest evidence that human nature can give of sincerity.

79. In this circumstance, it may be perceived, how much the evidence for Christianity goes beyond all ordinary historical evidence. A profane historian relates a series of events which happen in a particular age; and we count it well if it be his own age, and if the history which he gives us be the testimony of a cotemporary author. Another historian succeeds him at the distance of years, and by repeating the same story, gives additional evidence of his testimony to its truth. A third historian perhaps goes over the same ground, and lends another confirmation to the history. And it is thus, by collecting all the lights which are thinly scattered over the tract of ages and of centuries, that we obtain all the evidence which can be got, and all the evidence that is generally wished for.

80. Now, there is room for a thousand presumptions, which, if admitted, would overturn the whole of this evidence. For any thing we know, the first historians may have had some interest in disguising the truth, or substituting in its place a falsehood, and a fabrication. True, it has not been contradicted, but they form a very small number of men who feel strongly or particularly interested in a question of history. The literary and speculative men of that age may have perhaps been engaged in other pursuits, or their testimonies may have perished in the wreck of centuries. The second historian may have been so far removed in point of time from the events of his narratives,

that he can furnish us not with an independent, but with a derived testimony. He may have copied his account from the original historian, and the falsehood have come down to us in the shape of an authentic and well attested history. Presumptions may be multiplied without end, yet in spite of them, there is a natural confidence in the veracity of man, which disposes us to as firm a belief in many of the facts of ancient history, as in the occurrences of the present day.

81. The history of the gospel, however, stands distinguished from all other history, by the uninterrupted nature of its testimony, which carries down its evidences, without a chasm, from its earliest promulgation to the present day. We do not speak of the superior weight and splendour of its evidences, at the first publication of that history, as being supported, not merely by the testimony of one, but by the concurrence of several independent witnesses. We do not speak of its subsequent writers, who follow one another in a far closer and more crowded train, than there is any other example of in the history or literature of the world. We speak of the strong though unwritten testimony of its numerous proselytes, who, in the very fact of their proselytism, give the strongest possible confirmation to the gospel, and fill up every chasm in the recorded evidence of past times.

82. In the written testimonies for the truth of the Christian religion, Barnabas comes next in order to the first promulgators of the evangelical story. He was a cotemporary of the apostles, and writes a very few years after the publication of the pieces which make up the New Testament. Clement follows, who was a fellow-labourer of Paul, and writes an epistle in the name of the church of Rome, to the church of Corinth. The written testimonies follow one another with a closeness and a rapidity of which there is no example; but what we insist on at present, is the unwritten and implied testimony of the people who composed these two churches. There can be no fact better established, than that these two churches were planted in the days of the apostles, and that the epistles which were respectively addressed to them, were held in the utmost authority and veneration. There is no doubt, that the leading facts of the gospel history were familiar to them; that it was in the power of many individuals amongst them to verify these facts, either by their own personal observation, or by an actual conversation with eye-witnesses; and that in particular, it was in the

power of almost every individual in the church of Corinth, either to verify the miracles which St. Paul alludes to, in his epistle to that church, or to detect and expose the imposition, had there been no foundation for such an allusion. What do we see in all this, but the strongest possible testimony of a whole people to the truth of the Christian miracles : there is nothing like this in common history, the formation of a society, which can only be explained by the history of the gospel, and where the conduct of every individual furnishes a distinct pledge and evidence of its truth. And to have a full view of the argument, we must reflect, that it is not one, but many societies scattered over the different countries of the world ; that the principle, upon which each society was formed, was the divine authority of Christ and his apostles, resting upon the recorded miracles of the New Testament ; that these miracles were wrought with a publicity, and at a nearness of time, which rendered them accessible to the enquiries of all, for upwards of half a century ; that nothing but the power of conviction could have induced the people of that age to embrace a religion so disgraced and so persecuted ; that every temptation was held out for its disciples to abandon it ; and that though some of them, overpowered by the terrors of punishment, were driven to apostacy, yet not one of them has left us a testimony which can impeach the miracles of Christianity, or the integrity of its first teachers.

83. It may be observed, that in pursuing the line of continuity from the days of the apostles, the written testimonies for the truth of the Christian miracles follow one another in closer succession, than we have any other example of in ancient history. But what gives such peculiar and unprecedented evidence to the history of the gospel, is that in the concurrence of the multitudes who embraced it, and in the existence of those numerous churches and societies of men who espoused the profession of the Christian faith, we cannot but perceive, that every small interval of time betwixt the written testimonies of authors is filled up by materials so strong and so firmly cemented, as to present us with an unbroken chain of evidence, carrying as much authority along with it, as if it had been a diurnal record, commencing from the days of the apostles, and authenticated through its whole progress by the testimony of thousands.

84. Every convert to the Christian faith in these days gives one additional testimony to the truth of the gospel history. Is

he a Gentile? The sincerity of his testimony is approved by the persecutions, the sufferings, the danger, and often the certainty of martyrdom, which the profession of Christianity incurred. Is he a Jew? The sincerity of his testimony is approved by all these evidences, and in addition to them by this well known fact, that the faith and doctrine of Christianity was in the highest degree repugnant to the wishes and prejudices of that people. It ought never to be forgotten, that in as far as Jews are concerned, Christianity does not owe a single proselyte to its doctrines, but to the power and credit of its evidences, and that Judea was the chief theatre on which these evidences were exhibited. It cannot be too often repeated, that these evidences rest not upon arguments but upon facts, and that the time, and the place, and the circumstance, rendered these facts accessible to the enquiries of all who chose to be at the trouble of this examination. And there can be no doubt that this trouble was taken, whether we reflect on the nature of the Christian faith, as being so offensive to the pride and bigotry of the Jewish people, or whether we reflect on the consequences of embracing it, which were derision, and hatred, and banishment, and death. We may be sure, that a step which involved in it such painful sacrifices, would not be entered into upon light and insufficient grounds. In the sacrifices they made, the Jewish converts gave every evidence of having delivered an honest testimony in favour of the Christian miracles; and when we reflect, that many of them must have been eye-witnesses, and all of them had it in their power to verify these miracles, by conversation and correspondence with bye-standers, there can be no doubt, that it was not merely an honest, but a competent testimony. There is no fact better established, than that many thousands among the Jews believed in Jesus and his apostles; and we have therefore to allege their conversion, as a strong additional confirmation to the written testimony of the original historians.

85. One of the popular objections against the truth of the Christian miracles, is the general infidelity of the Jewish people. We are convinced, that at the moment of proposing this objection, an actual delusion exists in the mind of the infidel. In his conception, the Jews and the Christians stand opposed to each other. In the belief of the latter, he sees nothing but a party or an interested testimony, and in the unbelief of the former, he

sees a whole people persevering in their ancient faith and resisting the new faith, on the ground of its insufficient evidences. He forgets all the while, that the testimony of a great many of these Christians, is in fact the testimony of Jews. He only attends to them in their present capacity. He contemplates them in the light of Christians, and annexes to them all that suspicion and incredulity which are generally annexed to the testimony of an interested party. He is aware of what they are at present, Christians and defenders of Christianity; but he has lost sight of their original situation, and is totally unmindful of this circumstance, that in their transition from Judaism to Christianity, they have given him the very evidence he is in quest of. Had another thousand of these Jews renounced the faith of their ancestors, and embraced the religion of Jesus, they would have been equivalent to a thousand additional testimonies in favour of Christianity, and testimonies too of the strongest and most unsuspecting kind, that can well be imagined. But this evidence would make no impression on the mind of an infidel, and the strength of it is disguised, even from the eyes of the Christian. These thousand, in the moment of their conversion, lose the appellation of Jews, and merge into the name and distinction of Christians. The Jews, though diminished in number, retain the national appellation; and the obstinacy with which they persevere in the belief of their ancestors, is still looked upon as the adverse testimony of an entire people. So long as one of that people continues a Jew, his testimony is looked upon as a serious impediment in the way of the Christian evidences. But the moment he becomes a Christian, his motives are contemplated with distrust. He is one of the obnoxious and suspected party. The mind carries a reference only to what he is, and not to what he has been. It overlooks the change of sentiment, and forgets, that in the renunciation of old habits, and old prejudices, in defiance to sufferings and disgrace, in attachment to a religion so repugnant to the pride and bigotry of their nation, and above all, in their submission to a system of doctrines which rested its authority on the miracles of their own time, and their own remembrance, every Jewish convert gives the most decisive testimony which man can give for the truth and divinity of our religion.

(To be continued.)

OF THE METHODIST DOCTRINES.

From the London Methodist Magazine.

(Concluded from page 215.)

I WOULD also notice another source of false reasoning and error, which is, when we imagine that the terms made use of in the sacred writings, by which it has pleased God to reveal himself to man, are used in that gross sense, in which the same terms are used, as applicable to man. Thus no person can reasonably suppose that the Divine Being has arms or feet; that he walketh or rideth upon the wings of the wind. Those expressions, and many others, it is well known, are used to convey to us the knowledge of the Divine power, goodness, justice, wrath, mercy, &c. So when the terms Father and Son are used, no person surely would apply them in the gross sense; but as it hath pleased God to make use of those expressions as the most suitable, we are to receive them as they are given in the Sacred Writings. The terms Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are there used to convey to us the doctrine of three persons in one Godhead. That those words are the most proper, we cannot doubt, because they are the terms used by the Holy Spirit, and used in reference to the Triune God; not merely in reference to the incarnation of our Lord, but to the eternal Jehovah. If any person replies, "But I cannot comprehend how those terms can apply to a spiritual and Divine Being," we say, our reason is not to be the judge of the propriety of such expressions; but as it is the revelation of God, we receive it without attempting to fathom the mystery.

The primitive Christian Church undoubtedly received that doctrine; and the compilers of our Liturgy have interwoven it throughout their excellent work.

A few extracts from some of the ancient fathers, will be sufficient to shew what the doctrine of the primitive church was, on that important subject.

Justin Martyr, in his Apology for the Christians, has the following expression; "But now if we say, that the Logos of God, is properly the begotten of God, by a generation quite different from that of men, as I have already mentioned, yet even this, I say, is no more than what you might very well tolerate."

Again. "One article of our faith is, that Christ is the first begotten of God." Again, "For they who affirm the Son to be the Father, are guilty of not knowing the Father, and likewise of being ignorant that the Father of the universe has a Son, who being the *Logos*, and first begotten of God, is God."

Tertullian, in his Apology for the Christians, reasons largely on the subject, and at the close of one train of arguments, has the following expression: "Thus it is, that the *Logos*, which came forth from God, is both God, and the Son of God, and those two are one."

Vincentius Lirinensis wrote his Commonitory in the year 434, and clearly states the doctrine of the primitive church to be, that "there were two substances in Christ, one of which was Divine, the other human; one begotten of the Father, the other born of his mother." Again, "Thus in one and the same Christ, there are two substances, but one Divine, the other human. One from God the Father, the other from the virgin mother. One co-eternal and equal to the Father, the other temporary and inferior to the Father. One of the same substance with the Father, the other of the same substance with the mother; yet these two different substances make but one and the same Christ."

The errors which arose in the Christian Church, in the three first ages, were numerous, for one error generally opened the way for another. Sabellius began with denying Jesus to be the Son of God as to his Divine nature; but at the same time allowed him to be God.

Dionysius, one of the Christian Bishops, in a letter which he wrote on that occasion, strongly reprobates the novel system of Sabellius, and speaks of Jesus as "the only begotten Son."

When the Arian heresy more fully and openly appeared, a council of the chief Christian Bishops was held at Nice, at which the Emperor presided, and where the Creed, generally termed the Nicene Creed, was formed, and was signed by three hundred and eighteen Bishops. In that Council the following articles were inserted in the Creed, as expressive of the faith of the Christian Church, and also as a bulwark against any future attacks on that faith. "And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten not made, Being of one substance with the Father By whom all things were made."

Some time afterwards, the Creed which is generally termed the Creed of St. Athanasius, was formed, still more effectually to explain and guard the important doctrine of the Trinity. The following parts of the Creed, fully prove what was then the catholic doctrine : " The Son is of the Father alone ; not made, nor created, but begotten.—For the right faith is, that we believe and confess : that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man ; God, of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds : and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world ; Perfect God and perfect Man : of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting ; Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead : and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood."

The same doctrine runs through every part of the Liturgy, and proves that the venerable Reformers stood firm on that important ground. In the articles of religion which were drawn up by them, they have particularly stated that sacred truth, " The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father."

The venerable founder of Methodism, who appears to have been particularly directed of God, did not neglect to state that sacred truth. In his notes on the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews he says,* " Thou art my Son, God of God, Light of Light. This day have I begotten thee. I have begotten thee from eternity, which by its unalterable permanency of duration, is one continued, unsuccessive day. I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. I will own myself to be his Father, and him to be my Son, by eminent tokens of my peculiar love. The former clause relates to his natural Sonship, by an eternal inconceivable generation ; the other to his Father's acknowledgment, and treatment of him, as his incarnate Son." Again, " *By whom also he made the worlds* ; therefore the Son was before all worlds. His glory reaches from everlasting to everlasting, though God spake by Him to us only in these last days." Such was the view which Mr. Wesley had of that truth, and it is well known that in many of his hymns, and those of his brother Charles, the same doctrine is clearly stated :

* It is in general well known to the Methodists, that his notes on the New Testament, and Sermons, are the legal standard of our doctrines.

“Thy co-eternal Son display,
And call my darkness into day.”

“Thou art the co-eternal Son,
In substance with thy Father one ;
In person different we proclaim,
In power and majesty the same !”

“For all the plenitude Divine,
Resides in his eternal Son.”

“He spake the word and it was done,
The universe his word obey’d ;
His word is his eternal Son,
And Christ the whole creation made.”

“From thee through an eternal now,
The Son, thine offspring flow’d ;
An everlasting Father thou,
As everlasting God.”

“Thy wond’rous love the Godhead show’d,
Contracted to a span :
The co-eternal Son of God,
The mortal son of man.”

To transcribe all the verses which are on that important subject is unnecessary, for the same sound doctrine runs through the whole.

When we turn to the Sacred Writings, we find a variety of passages, which can bear no other construction than that, which has been uniformly given to them by the orthodox part of the Christian church. Our Lord is repeatedly spoken of as the only begotten of the Father, perfectly distinct from all created beings. In the conversation which our Lord had with the Jews, he said, “My Father worketh hitherto and I work.” The Jews immediately sought to kill him, because he said that “God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” If the Jews had mistaken the meaning of our Lord, why did he not correct their error ; but so far was he from informing them that they had mistaken his meaning, that he even confirmed it by saying, “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” St. John says, “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath de-

clared him." Surely he could not speak of the human nature of our Lord, being in the bosom of the Father; of its having seen God, and having declared him; the passage applies to him who was one with the Father, before his incarnation.

Our Lord says, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." Of the human nature of our Lord, it could not be said, "I came forth from the Father," in the same sense in which it is immediately added, "Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."

In our Lord's address to his heavenly Father, as recorded by St. John, in the 17th chapter, there are many expressions which cannot be applied to the human nature of Christ: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with thine ownself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, says, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son, (his own proper Son,) in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." As also in his epistle to the Galatians, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, (his proper Son,) made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Both passages evidently implying, that Jesus was the Son of God prior to his incarnation.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews uses clear and decisive language also on that important subject, in that sublime passage, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." He also ascribes the work of creation to Jesus Christ as the Son: "Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;" and as the Son, he is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person.

Such, Sir, are the express testimonies of the ancient fathers; of the venerable Reformers who were the compilers of the Liturgy; of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism; and, above all, of the Sacred Writers.

Shall we leave those testimonies, and enter on the doubtful field of theory? Or leave the old way-marks, and enter into the

trackless desert? Certainly not; millions of Christians have followed the ancient guides, and have entered the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem; and I trust that, through the power of Divine grace, we shall walk in the same plain and beaten track, neither deviating to the right hand nor to the left. We must be careful not to anathematize those persons who do not think with us; to their own master they stand or fall; but we, as a body of people, whom the Lord has graciously raised up as out of the dust, and whom he has honoured with almost unexampled prosperity in the revival of his work, must be careful to "walk by the same rule, and mind the same things." Of Methodism, as to purity of doctrine, soundness of discipline, and true Christian experience, I would ever say, "*Esto perpetua.*"—

I am, your's, &c.

Nov. 17, 1817.

G. MARSDEN.

BIOGRAPHY.

From the London Methodist Magazine.

An Account of the Life, and Conversion from Heathenism to Christianity, of GEORGE NADORIS DE SILVA, SAMARA MAHA NAYEKA, late a Budhist Priest in the Island of Ceylon.

(Continued from page 225.)

OUR manner of proceeding with him, was this: when it was announced the *Rajegooroo* was come, one of us, whose turn it was, went to meet him in the parlour. As we had undertaken to assist him in reading and writing English, our first business was to inspect his copy, and hear him read a chapter in the New Testament. We then desired our usher to write out a fresh copy; and in the mean time, by the help of an interpreter, proceeded to discourse with him on the subject of Christianity.

These discourses, or debates, for he uniformly took part against Revelation, would sometimes last for several hours together; and often, on his part, with an excessive degree of warmth, and impatience of controversion. As for ourselves, we knew we were on solid ground, and hence endeavoured to show

him that we relied more on the unanswerable evidences of Christianity for the triumph of our argument, than on any undue warmth of temper in the defence of it.

Our principal reliance, however, was on the enlightening and converting influences of the Holy Spirit. Never did we behold a fitter object for these influences than was *Rajegooroo*; and hence, in addition to our own ardent prayers for his *moral conversion*, we did not fail to remind him, that as Christianity was a religion sent from God, and hence might be supposed to include more difficulties in it than those systems which were merely of a human origin, so he must not expect fully to understand its sacred discoveries without frequently praying for the inward illumination of its Divine Author. We likewise gave him to understand that our religion revealed to us *blessings to be experienced*, as well as *doctrines to be believed*: and, as in common life, experience was considered a superior kind of evidence to that of the best theory, so in religion it was super-eminently the case; and that the grand glory and boast of our religion was, that in all those persons who had the deepest acquaintance with it, *the experience of their hearts* united with *the conviction of their understandings* to prove that it is of God.

While dwelling on this subject we generally found great liberty of soul. Sometimes, I could scarcely forbear weeping over him; for I was convinced that in his case the *moral change was the thing principally necessary*; and it was remarkable, what a powerful effect these appeals would have upon him, and how suddenly they would appear to subdue his opposition to Christianity. We would then urge upon him the necessity of prayer; and he would frequently surprise us by assuring us, it was a duty which he did not omit, and scarcely ever parted with us, after the conversation had taken that experimental turn, without begging of us to continue our prayers for his *real conversion*.

It is for the reader to decide, how far we were warranted with these appearances, in looking upon him from this period, *as a sincere inquirer after truth*. It will be easily supposed we were encouraged to expect the desired result, and that we continued to feel the most tender concern for his salvation in all our interviews with him.

In this manner he was in the habit of attending at our house, almost daily, for about three months; during which time he had the benefit of frequent conversations with all whom he thought

capable of affording him any instruction, especially with the Rev. Mr. Bisset, and the Honourable and Rev. T. J. Twistleton. From the latter he obtained some useful information on the subject of *geography*, which is a science with which the Cingalese in general are completely unacquainted.

I think we may safely say, that there never was a theological battle harder won in this island before, or which excited the feelings of all parties concerned, more than this contest between the disciple of Budhu and the advocates of Christianity.

Our first object was to state to him, as concisely and fully as possible, the historical and doctrinal truths of our Divine Revelation; but this being done, we found him still to retain the strongest possible prejudice in favour of his own system. We then changed our mode of proceeding, and began by a candid, and particular investigation of his Buddhist faith. He repeated to us a number of excellent moral precepts which were contained in their sacred book; and expatiated largely on the merits and virtues of Budhu, insisting that the religion which he taught was every way equal to the necessities and happiness of mankind.

We readily allowed the excellence of the moral code to which he referred; but dwelled pointedly on the fact, that Budhu positively denied the existence of a great Supreme Creator and Preserver, and attributed the original commencement, and present continuance of all things to mere chance. We entered at large into the folly of such a creed, and the difficulties and contradictions which it involved, and which it is not necessary to repeat in this narrative; and observed, that the omission of the Supreme Deity, the Creator and Preserver of mankind, from the Buddhist creed, must have proceeded either from depravity or ignorance in Budhu who had formed it. That if it proceeded from the *depravity* of their celebrated founder, there could be no room for any question as to what steps he should take with his present views: and that if it arose from the *ignorance* of Budhu, the plain path of duty for him to pursue was to forsake the darkness of heathenism, and to embrace the light of the Gospel; which he would discover to be a religion which contained a complete and becoming revelation of that, as well as every other important truth which it was necessary for man to know.

Here we kept our ground, and resolved to enter on no other position but this, till we prevailed. If he ever started any other

subject, we always brought him to this point, for we readily foresaw, that without giving our conversations some specific end, they might be lengthened out for months to come, and with mutual disadvantages; and we had no time to spare for argument merely for the sake of contradiction, which he easily conceived.

For some time he endeavoured to evade this conclusion, by saying, that their system acknowledged a Creator; and referred to *Maha-Brachma-i*, or in other words *Brachma*, whom the Buddhist priests will borrow from the Hindoos when they are pressed in argument, to avoid the disgrace of a defeat that proves them to be atheists. But finding we were well acquainted with the doctrines of Budhu on this point, and that we were determined to keep him to his own creed, until he was brought to abandon it; he then took an opposite standing, and with all the resolution of a party on "*the forlorn hope*," he seemed determined to dispute every inch of ground, and produced every difficulty which an atheist could possibly imagine, as an argument against the existence of God.

We were often struck with the remarkable similarity between the arguments used by this Oriental atheist, and those urged by the atheistical philosophers of Europe, against the being of a Supreme Deity. On his part this did not proceed from any acquaintance with the writings of the latter. And to us it appeared an evident proof of the oneness of the origin of Atheism, whether in Europe or Asia.

The same "*God of this world*," who "*blinds the minds of those*" who disbelieve a divine agency in Europe, is the father of the same race of unbelievers in all the world besides; and from the same satanic storehouse he supplies his various children with the same set of subterfuges to defend the same error, and to vindicate the same criminal blindness.—Rom. i. 18—32.

The principal objection of *Rajegooroo* centered in *the origin of moral and natural evil*; the existence of which, he maintained, was utterly irreconcilable with the existence of a supreme, all-wise, and omnipotent God. If there be *a supreme Creator*, says he, and if he be *all-wise*, he must have foreseen that sin would make its appearance in the world; and if he be *all-powerful* he might have prevented it; and if he be *supreme* he certainly *would* have prevented it, as being opposed to his government. So that, in fact, he would observe, the whole of the sin and misery

which at present exist in the world, is a standing proof against the existence of a Supreme God with the attributes such as you represent.

We observed to him, that the existence of sin in the world presented no difficulty in the way of our belief in God, since the Creator had revealed to us in his holy word, that he had made the first man upright and holy, but at the same time a free-agent, capable of standing as well as of falling; that he had given man a law to regulate his conduct; and had placed him in this lower world as a probationer for a better, and more blissful one; that it was inconsistent with the idea of the divine government of *free agents in a state of probation*, to force their obedience, or controul their choice.

That God had made a sufficient display of his power and wisdom in forming creatures capable of self-determination; and, that man being left to fix his own destiny, had involved himself in sin and misery: God, however, had most illustriously displayed all his Divine perfections in the glorious remedy he has provided in the salvation of the Gospel: a remedy, which if rightly applied, is calculated to free men from the influence of moral evil in this world, and to save them from the awful consequences thereof in the world to come.

This did not fully satisfy him; still he contended that the very *origin* of moral evil, involved a denial of a supreme Creator and God. "If," said he, "there be a Creator who has *made all things*, then he must have *made sin*. Here is a contradiction, that God should have made sin, which, nevertheless, you say he dislikes, and which so completely disorganizes the rest of his works." We here reminded him that sin was not a *creature* or *thing*, and was never spoken of as such only in a figurative way, and consequently could not be said to have been *created*. That sin was a *moral defect* in the creature, but not a creature of itself.

"Allowing this," said he, "still if there be a defect in the creature, that defect must have proceeded from some corresponding defect in the Creator; and that which implies defect in a supreme God, necessarily disproves his existence." We endeavoured to correct his views on this point, giving him to understand that God had originally created man holy and upright, but that sin had been introduced by the agency of a wicked spirit called the devil.

Seeming to have gained a complete triumph, "Granting your statement to be true," said he, "who created the devil? And who made him wicked?" We replied, that undoubtedly God had created him, but had of course made him holy and pure; because a holy and pure God, such as he is described to be, in his holy Word, could not possibly have been the author of any thing unholy or impure. That, considering sin to be *a moral defect*, which was the best way we could define it, the sinfulness of the devil was no proof that he had been *created* with that defect, since *the subsequent defect* of any thing was never considered as an argument that it had not been *previously perfect*. But that our sacred Scripture did not give us any account of the manner in which this defect first made its appearance in satan. For that such a disclosure was not absolutely necessary in a system of religion: That the Christian religion was sent into the world as a remedy for the moral evil, so deeply rooted in our natures, and in this character it had stood the test of ages: That it was not indispensably necessary that a doctor should inform a sick man how he had imbibed his disorder. The grand point was to furnish him with a sufficient remedy. And that man would justly deserve to die of his disease, who refused to follow the prescription of a well-tried medical man, merely because he did not explain to him the manner in which his complaint had originated.

In applying this illustration to his case, we proceeded: That common experience convinces us we are all sinners; there is no religion in the world which gives so rational an account of the introduction of sin into the world, as that given in the Bible. The Almighty's having provided a remedy for it, was a sufficient evidence that the disease did not originate with him. And if he, (Rajegooroo) could produce a religion better calculated to remedy the moral defect so prevalent in the world than Christianity, we would embrace it.

When he found us thus able to retire honourably from all the difficulties in which he had imagined he had involved us, he would often forget the rules of propriety, and display the most mortified emotions of vexation. We required no stronger evidence of the inward strugglings of his mind, and of the remaining convulsions of deeply wounded pride and self-sufficiency, rising above the fairly conquered faculties of reason and candour. At such times we always avoided any thing having the appear-

ance of triumph ; and would press on his attention the comparative superiority of Christianity over every other religion known in the world, when its influence in the destruction of moral evil is considered.

Some heathen systems are possessed of good moral *precepts*, and that is all. But to give moral *precepts only*, to men sunken in vice and immorality, corrupted in principle, and vitiated by long habits of sin, is the same as giving the strictest orders to a crippled, diseased, or dying servant, necessarily unable to execute them.

Christianity, in its theory and in its operation, is twofold ; it is both the *letter* and *spirit* ; *the former* informs us of our duty : *the latter* inspires us with an inclination, and an ability to perform that duty. *The former* shows and convinces us of the evils of our nature, and the errors of our life and conduct ; and reveals to us the displeasure of a holy God in consequence thereof, and the certainty of endless woe to all who continue in a state of sin, living and dying therein. *The latter* adds energy and feeling to those discoveries of *the former*, and enables us to tear ourselves away from the rivetted chains of wickedness in which we had long been enslaved, and to embrace the offered mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord. And by the peculiar genius of our religion, *the spirit* always accompanies *the letter*, wherever it is exhibited by purity of doctrine, and holiness of life. In proof of this we were in the habit of reading to him such portions of Scripture as these, Matthew xxviii. 19, 20. 2 Cor. ii. 14. 1 Cor. xv. 10. 1 John v. 10. Acts xvi. 14. 2 Cor. iv. 6, &c. &c.

Here, we would observe, is the grand superiority and peculiar glory of Christianity over heathenism, even in its purest system. If the one, in its moral code, resembles a fair body, beauteous to behold ; the other, being no less fair in its outward form, is besides animated with a holy, quickening, operative spirit. It is *this Spirit*, which God has designed for the regeneration of the whole world. For our prophecies declare that *the Almighty will pour out his Spirit upon "all flesh,"* and *"righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."* Already it has done great things. Still it is doing great things in various parts of the world ; and much greater things shall hereafter be done !

After several conversations of *this kind*, (which it may be supposed cannot be fully recapitulated, when it is remembered that these topics were the subject of extended controversy every day

CONVERSION OF A BUDDHIST PRIEST.

for three months) he appeared considerably lowered in the tone of his mind ; and the concessions which he often made in favour of Christianity frequently gratified and encouraged us. I believe we were greatly assisted and favoured in our conversations with him ; and many arguments which we were then enabled to use, and which appeared at the time to make a considerable impression on his mind, had never occurred to us before, and I am sorry to say, from our very many occupations, have since escaped our recollection.

I have not pretended to *delinsate* the controversy, but merely have made the present short sketch of it, to shew how determined an opponent he was to Christianity, and the simple gospel weapons with which we endeavoured to prevail. Neither do we wish to claim *to ourselves* the sole credit of his conversion from heathenism. I only mention the part we took therein for the satisfaction and gratification of our very numerous friends at home.

A curious circumstance occurred one day during this controversy, which, though simple, and not connected with any thing peculiarly interesting, yet I insert the mention of it, as it gives a little idea of the man, and the excessive cleverness and effrontery with which he could maintain his atheistical opinions. Brother Clough and myself had been out together, obtaining subscriptions to our new estate, and happened to be detained beyond our usual hour. On Rajegooroo coming at the appointed time, and finding we were not at home, he sat down to wait our return. In the mean time a respectable country-born young man, who had frequently been our interpreter with him, came in and sat down likewise. This friend resided at Galle during the time brother Clough was there, and was the principal interpreter between him and Petrus, the first converted priest. Having thus been made a little acquainted with the arguments used with such success in the case of Petrus, he almost felt himself equal to a controversy on the same side ; and being animated with a commendable zeal for religion, after a short pause, he thought he would begin by himself a little argument in favour of the existence of God. No doubt it was with some degree of trepidation our friend introduced the subject ; and Rajegooroo had seen too much of the world, and knew human nature too well, not to profit by that circumstance ; and appearing not much to approve of combating with any one *less than a Missionary* ! he boldly turned round, and

looking him full in the face, said, "You talk about *God Almighty*! Who is this *God Almighty*? Who made him? WHERE does he live?" So abrupt and harsh an attack, and in so unexpected a manner, completely non-plussed the young man, and he could make no reply; and, I dare say, was glad of an excuse to leave the room. Meanwhile, his victorious antagonist continued to walk backward and forward in the parlour, as though sensible that, at least, a *common Christian* was not able to get the better of him.

When we came in, the young man told the circumstance to one of us, and added, "SIR, THIS IS A VERY ODD MAN, he has been putting such questions to me as I never heard before, and which I could not possibly tell how to answer."

An English reader would perhaps be surprised to hear that the heathen natives of this country, consider our belief in God to be as ridiculous a notion as we look upon their atheistical sentiments to be, and treat it with equal, if not superior levity. It is not long since a young priest, who is now living with us, and who is a native of Candy, was sent for by a native headman of great rank, from the interior, who was on a visit at Colombo, and who knew the youth in his priestly days. One of his first questions to him was, "Well, how do you like your new situation? How do you like to live with these people WHO TALK ABOUT GOD?" So that our heathen Buddhist neighbours, by their own confession, are "*without God*," and hence "*without hope in the world*."

(To be continued.)

SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATED.

MATTHEW XXI. 14. AND MARK XI. 12. ILLUSTRATED.

"THERE has been no little diversity of opinion among Commentators on the subject of the barren Fig-Tree, cursed by our Lord, Matt xxi. 14, related also by Mark, chap. xi. 12; very noticeable terms, which I beg leave slightly to paraphrase.

"Jesus, coming early from Bethany, was hungry: Seeing a Fig-Tree from afar, (at such a distance that he could only dis-

cern its spread of leaves,) he went to it, *if perhaps*, (*εἰ αὖτε*) he might find some figs on it, (for it was not yet the usual season for figs to be fit for gathering on Fig-Trees in general, *εἰ γὰρ οὐ καιρὸς συκῶν*;) but he found leaves only: and he said, none shall ever find any fruit on thee hereafter."

It is enquired, if this was *not the season* for figs, with what propriety did our Lord curse this barren Fig-Tree? And our too common inattention to the natural history of the East, has hitherto precluded a just and definite answer to the question. Interpreters have racked their invention, and misapplied their learning: some have rendered the words, "*it was not a year for figs.*" This the Greek will not bear; but, if it would, to what purpose is this rendering? Some have wished to read, "It was the season for figs." But this is violating the text: as the time was March 31, certainly long enough before the general fig season. Dr. Doddridge, and I believe, most writers with him, think this was of the *early*, the prime, "the most delicate sort of figs;" and ripe in April; but certainly not so early as this time. Moreover, in this case, what need could there be of the Evangelist's "*if perhaps*," as the fruit being barely ripe, could not be supposed to have been gathered from the tree? Matthew, who says nothing about its not being the fig season, omits also this, "*if perhaps*." Besides, do such valuable kinds of trees grow by the road side? Are they not cultivated by proprietors? Our Lord was going from Bethany to Jerusalem.

Let us see how this story will read, after we have perused an Extract from Norden's Travels in Egypt, vol. 1. p. 79.

"I shall remark, that they have in Egypt *divers sorts of figs*; but if there is any difference between them, *a particular kind differs still more*; I mean that which the Sycamore bears, that they name in Arabic, *giomez*. It was upon a tree of this sort that Zaccheus got up to see our Saviour pass through Jericho.

"This sycamore is of the height of a beech, and bears its fruit in a manner quite different from other trees. It has them on the trunk itself, which shoots out like sprigs, in form of a grape stalk, at the end of which grows the fruit, close to one another, most like bunches of grapes. *The tree is always green, and bears fruit SEVERAL TIMES in the year, WITHOUT OBSERVING ANY CERTAIN SEASONS*; for I have seen some sycamores, that have fruit two months after others. The fruit has the figure and smell

of real figs ; but is inferior to them in the taste, having a disgusting sweetness. Its colour is a yellow, inclining to an ochre, shadowed by a flesh colour. In the inside it resembles the common figs, excepting that it has a blackish colouring, with yellow spots. This sort of tree is pretty common in Egypt. The (common) people, for the greater part, live on its fruit."

This author asserts, that the tree, called a sycamore, into which Zaccheus climbed to see Jesus, was of this kind, Luke xix. 4.—And it is not improbable, but that which was withered was of the same sort. Both grew by the way side ; and it is likely neither of them was *private* property. Our Lord, therefore, by causing that on which he sought fruit to wither, did not injure any owner : it was not in a garden, nor of the kind usually planted against a wall, for such an one would not have borne the weight of Zaccheus. This tree is called by the general name *syken*, both by Matthew and Mark ; and might well be one of the inferior kind. Matthew adds, (*μίσαν*) a single tree. "This tree is always green," (doubtless with leaves,) "it bears fruit *several times in the year* ;" so that a person viewing it, at almost any time in the year, from a distance, cannot determine whether it has fruit on it, or not ; which very well accounts for the "*if perhaps*" of Mark ; and the advancing of Jesus towards it ; as supposing it might have fruit on it, while it was not the general season of gathering figs from the kinds usually cultivated. - This bore, it seems, a wild, but edible kind of figs ; the fare of the poorer people. *Ficus fatua*. If the reader has an opportunity of consulting Whitby on the Place, he will see how near he was, by the help of Theophrastus, to the right interpretation of this story, which yet, for want of just information in natural history, he has missed.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD DISPLAYED.

VIRTUES OF THE GUACO-PLANT.

From the Colonial Journal, for March, 1817.

It is an observation made by Pliny, (Nat. Hist. lib. 7.) that nature has, in one sense, been more liberal to brutes than to man, by providing the former with natural clothing, and gifting them with sufficient sagacity to know and defend themselves against their enemies; whereas man is destined to seek the same advantages by dint of labour and reflection—that the fact exists, nor can it be proved by any instance more remarkable than the one that forms the subject of this letter.

Among the most valuable and interesting discoveries made, in the tropical regions, in favour of suffering humanity, certainly we may rank that of the preservative and cure for the bites of venomous serpents; a virtue subsisting in the Bejuco del Guaco, a species of bind-weed. This secret is understood to have been long known to some of the Indians in the tropical parts of South America; but, ever mindful of the injustice and cruelty of their conquest, this, as well as the knowledge of many other important facts, preserved by tradition, they have uniformly refused to communicate to their intruders; even the missionaries sent among them, on whom they placed the greatest reliance, and held in profound veneration, were unable to wrest the secret from them. The virtues of the plant in question were, however, recently discovered, almost in an accidental manner, as will be seen by the following details; but as experience of every kind has now manifested that by the possession of this specific, the envenomed bite of the most dangerous reptiles of the earth, so abundant in all the West Indies, is no longer a subject of serious alarm, it becomes of consequence that it should be more generally known.

The Negroes in the province of Chocó, dependant on the kingdom of Santa Fe, were the first who observed a bird, called the Guaco, pursue and fight with serpents; and, on closer examination, they discovered that these were the common food of this animal. Before we proceed any further, it will be proper to premise, that this bird must not be confounded with the one

belonging to the species of herons, mentioned by Buffon, in the last volume of the Natural History of Birds, which he calls Guaco or Souaco, the name commonly given to it on the shores of Boulogne. The American Guaco, a denomination probably derived from the Indians, might rather enter into the class of carnivorous birds, under the head of hawks, as Catesby calls the Serpent-hawk, (*Expervier Serpent*,) from that reptile's being its food and object of destruction: and may deserve the name in the same manner as does the Sparrow-hawk, &c. The Negroes perceived that the Guaco, when wounded in its severe battles, always recurred to a certain plant, and never appeared to receive material injury. When unable to kill its enemy, they also noticed, that it availed itself of the leaves of the same plant to lay him asleep, and he then became an easy prey. Pushing their discoveries and experiments still further, they eventually ascertained that this same plant, to which they afterwards gave the name of Guaco, in reference to the bird which had taught them its virtues, not only, in all cases, cured the poisonous bites of the above insects, but also operated as a preservative against their destructive powers, when taken with a degree of frequency.

Mutis, the celebrated botanist of Santa Fe, previous to the above discovery being properly known, had been astonished at the facility with which the Negroes, inhabiting the neighbourhood and borders of the river Magdalena, caught serpents and carried them about in their hands and bosoms, without any dread or fatal effects; and, ever active in that spirit of research for which he was so much distinguished, the following experiments were made in his presence, and in that of several other botanists.

A Negro was obtained, well versed in the above dangerous trials, who brought with him a venomous serpent, known to the Spaniards by the name of *Taya*, in consequence of the white spots in has on the back something resembling the letter X. The Negro handled the serpent in every way he was desired, and gave it several blows, without its appearing roused or attempting to bite him. It was at first imagined that the serpent was not of the most venomous kind, or that the Negro had extracted its teeth; but on causing him to open its mouth, the rows of sharp teeth were found in perfect order, and ample assurances were moreover given, that it was of the most deadly species known in the provinces of Santa Fe. No further doubt was en-

tertained of the efficacy of the preservative, and one of the gentlemen resolved to undergo the same experiment the Negro had just performed.

For this purpose, the Negro pressed the juice of a handful of the leaves of the Guaco-plant into a glass, and caused the person to drink two table spoonfuls, after which he inoculated some of the same juice into the skin. He made eight small incisions; one in each foot; one in each of the fleshy parts of the hands; again between the fore finger and the thumb; and, lastly, on each side of the breast. On the appearance of blood, some of the juice was poured on, and well rubbed with the pounded leaves of the plant; which operation being fully performed, the person, if bitten, is considered as perfectly cured, and besides prepared to handle any serpent of the worst kind at pleasure. Various experiments were then tried, both by Mutis and his companions, and all proved the evident powers of the juice.—Several questions were also proposed to the Negro, respecting other plants; but he assured the bye-standers that he knew of no other as equally efficacious, and that this plant was always eaten by the Guaco or Serpent-hawk, when worsted by the serpents it attacked in search of food; moreover declaring that he had frequently witnessed the circumstance, and always noticed that the bird uniformly recurred to the same remedy.

The Guaco-plant is found indigenous in the neighbourhood of Maraquita, as well as in the hot and temperate parts of the vice-royalty of Santa Fe, and thrives singularly well on the margins of rivulets and in damp places. The plant, as above noticed, has been called Guaco, a name that was found preserved by tradition among the Negroes, from whom the communication was received, but its genus is not yet determined in botany. Its root is fibrous, and extends in every direction. It is a species of creeper or bind-weed, and its climbing and adhering shoot is round when young, but angular when old, and set with opposite leaves. These are green, intermixed with purple, smooth below, rough above, and somewhat hairy. The flower rises like a crest, is yellow, flosculous, and four petals are seen in each calyx. In the inside of the tassel of the flower, which is dented, are five stamina united to the apices. These, which are cylindrically shaped, surround the style, and contain long and bristly seeds.

Although, as a preservative, it was at first supposed unnecessary to inoculate with the juice of the Guaco-plant, under an impression that its effects on serpents arose out of the disagreeable smell that the plant emits, it was nevertheless found that the mode usually practised by the Negroes possessed some peculiar advantages, and that in like manner as the virus of the small pox, introduced by the smallest orifice into the system, affects the whole mass of the blood, this also might have some strong communicative properties which rendered inoculation more safe and efficacious. The juice operates as a powerful anodyne, and creates in the patient a copious perspiration.—When the cure has been performed in the manner above described, the native empirics nevertheless say, that it is advisable to continue the dose five or six times during the successive month, lest any of the venom should be left lurking behind. The repetition of the aforesaid process, moreover tends constantly to maintain in the humours of the body the strong effects of the herb, which operates as a shield against future poison, even though at the time of being bitten the plant should not be at hand to rub the wound and renew the dose. They further add, that the curative virtues of the plant subside if the same precaution is not used at the next increase of the moon, when it again becomes necessary to be inoculated by the hand of the empiric. This, however, is held out from no other than interested views, as the curing of serpents' bites among the Negroes is still a kind of trade; and both distinguished botanists and physicians have had ample and frequent proof, that the remedy and antidote are alike permanently efficacious. In fact, by the way of experiment, serpents have been handled long after the monthly period of inoculation had passed, though it is strongly recommended in cases of trial, that the person should prepare himself half an hour before the serpent is taken into the hand, by a dose of the fresh juice, and previously rubbing his hands with the leaf, a practice that has been frequently followed with success.

The experiments hitherto made on this subject, have not clearly pointed out whether it is the effluvia of the plant which acts on the reptile by creating a kind of disgust, or whether an agreeable sensation is communicated that lulls it, and makes it forget its natural malignity. It has however been noticed, that on spittle impregnated with the juice, being cast on the head of

the serpent, it appears to become drowsy, notwithstanding it was before in an irritated and restless state ; whereas, when handled by the person who has been previously prepared, it is uneasy, and evinces a wish to escape. A considerable quantity of the juice being poured on two serpents, it was observed, that the sensation of stupor was not very durable, for, after the lapse of a short period, they recovered their accustomed vigour, and were as active as before they had been sprinkled.

The Guaco-plant is now applied, as a cure for the bite of all kinds of serpents, by the Spanish physicians in the tropical provinces of South America. In those of Venezuela and Caracas, its use is become so general, that it has been planted and reared on all the large estates ; and every morning, when the labourers go out to work in the fields, a small calabash of the juice is carried with them, in case any misfortune happens to any of the people. This example is worth following in the West India Islands, where the plant may be easily obtained ; and with this view the present details are given, chiefly taken from what has been written on the subject by eminent persons of the faculty in Lima and Santa Fe.

As before observed, the Guaco-plant, although not in use for more than twenty-five years, has been found to possess sovereign virtues, and to counteract the poison of all the snakes and serpents peculiar to the Spanish main ; and experiments to this effect have there been made on the *taya*, as before-mentioned ; the *coral*, or coral-snake, called so from its red colour ; the *cascabel*, or rattle-snake ; and a green one, found near the city of Giron.* Indeed, no greater proof of the powerful effects of the plant in question can be brought forward than the case of the rattle-snake. The bite of the latter is both violent and grievous, nevertheless this remedy has proved efficacious to persons in the agony of death.

* Vallemont, in his *Dictionnaire Raisonne of Natural History* (verb. Serpent,) observes, that in Martinique a species of serpent is found, and there called the *coule-sang*, owing to the blood's gushing from every part of the person bitten. It is a small species of serpent, inclining to the viper ; the eyes glaring, the skin transparent, and spotted with white and black. The body is thin, and the tail very small. As the effect of the poison of this reptile is different from that of any other serpent, which rather tends to coagulate the blood, possibly the Guaco-plant might not be more successful than alkalies, which, in this case, have been tried with less effect than acids ; but, perhaps, this is the only solitary instance that can be mentioned as an exception.

However, it is proper to remark, that to proceed safely in the care of persons bitten with serpents, the fresh leaf of the plant is necessary, and its juice by itself, or mixed with a small portion of warm water is to be given to the patient in any period of the disease, and without any previous preparation. The chewed or bruised leaves are applied to the wound and the parts affected, and if the swelling has not gained the farthest extreme of the limb, the plant ought to be bound round the part to which the poison has not reached, in order that its progress may be there stopped. In the mean time, the dose must be repeated several times, and the patient may then throw aside his dread, and resume his customary occupations.

This plant has been found so efficacious as a remedy, in the tropical regions of the New World; the various experiments, made on both man and dogs, in the way of preventatives, have been so completely successful, that, besides the West Indies, it might be of the greatest service in Europe, where the plant also deserves the notice of the rational philanthropist, and the experiments of the public schools of medicine. Its virtues, once established, would render the plant an object of trade, and from this an essential relief might be derived to the ills of the human frame. The inhabitants of North America annually export a considerable quantity of snake-root; and it is to be hoped those of the southern continent will, ere long, be enabled to turn their attention to the number of herbs and gums with which their forests abound, for some of which we are already indebted to them, and that then the Guaco-plant may be reckoned in their list of exports.

If brought to this distance, perhaps the best method of conveying it would be, by extracting the juice, bottling it carefully, and packing it in a state of good preservation. This article might be abundantly supplied from Santa Fe, as well as many other parts of the main continent, and by a further chemical analysis it undoubtedly would be found to possess other commendable qualities, hitherto unknown. Even experiments already made, have proved that it is an excellent vermifuge, and the peculiar bitterness of the plant strongly corroborates the fact. It is also stomachic and tonic.

A species of creeper, or bind-weed, of partly a similar kind, is said by Father Gumilla to exist in Guayaquil; but its exact affinity with the Guaco-plant has not hitherto been traced.—

There is also another, mentioned by Mr. Jacquin, in his History of American plants, possessing properties not unlike those of the Guaco-plant, though different in genus and classification. This he describes under the name of *aristolochia anguicida*, *stipulis cordatis*, which answers to the description of the one called *carate*, in South America, of which the flower is denominated in Carthagenia *flor de alcatraz*, or pelican-flower, from its resemblance to the bill of the pelican; and its virtues, though by no means equal to those of the Guaco-plant, have an affinity.

Besides serpents, it is well known that there are several other animals whose poison is more or less active and deadly, against which the antidote in question might be rendered extremely valuable. Among the most terrible, is that of the blood and froth of a certain species of lizard, found in the island of Java, and used by the natives to poison their arrows. In order to obtain it, they suspend the lizard by the tail, and beat and irritate it till it emits from the mouth a yellow viscous matter, which is received into an earthen cup, and fermented in the sun. Afterwards, their arrows are steeped in it, and the wounds they inflict are of a deadly nature. In these cases, the Guaco-plant would undoubtedly answer the end desired, and certainly it is on that account highly deserving the attention of the physicians attached to the British armies in the East Indies, where the soldiers are alike exposed to the ills of war and the reptiles of the woods.

Several other herbs and roots have been used, with a partial degree of success, against the bites of serpents; and many other modes of cure are in practice among the natives of South America, some of which consist in bruising the head of the animal that has caused the wound, and applying it to it; but as none are so simple, safe, and efficacious as the Guaco-plant, it would be useless to enumerate them in this place. This specific is, besides, now well known, frequent and easily found on almost all the margins of rivulets, and in damp places, and can also be readily transplanted, or propagated by means of seed.

THE GRACE OF GOD MANIFESTED.

To the Editors of the Methodist Magazine.

To record the lives and deaths of the pious, was a practice amongst the primitive Christians, in the midst of their distresses and persecutions, for the purpose of exciting each other to diligence and perseverance, by such holy examples—And it is a practice that has been pursued in the church of God ever since those pure days—It is of very essential use still to the church and to individuals; and it is often made to serve the cause of religion, by convicting the ungodly, and leading them to repentance, when probably other means have proved ineffectual.—These considerations induce me to send you this short memoir of Mrs. MARY ANN PEACO, to be inserted in your Magazine, if you think it worthy of a place there.

L. R. FECHTIG.

Annapolis, March 19, 1818.

MEMOIR OF MRS. MARY ANN PEACO.

The subject of this memoir was a native of this place; she was an early partaker of the saving grace of God; perhaps before she arrived to the age of sixteen years. Methodism had not been long introduced here at that time, and the few who had united to serve God, were exposed to persecution and contempt. Notwithstanding this, she (together with her mother) united with them to watch, and pray, and suffer together. This was soon after the American revolution. The instrument (in the divine hand) of her conversion, was *Jonathan Forest*, one among the first Methodist preachers in this division of God's vineyard.

The history of her life is not much known from the time of her conversion until the few last years of her mortal scene.—But from the time of her first experiencing religion to the day of her death, she had to contend with innumerable difficulties, arising from disappointments in worldly prospects, and other distressing circumstances—But in the midst of all she maintained her integrity, walked with God, and never lost her first love.

Love is the religion of the Gospel—Except the religion of the

person whose character we portray, is a picture of the religion of the bible, it is not worthy of imitation—nor will it bear the severity of the day of trial. But her religion was evangelical—It was like gold tried in the fire, and it bore the test without dimunition. She had taken the right method to obtain this grace: For, being humbled by the Spirit of truth, she confessed her sins, believed in Christ, found pardon, and received the witness of the Spirit in her heart, enabling her to cry “Abba Father.”

This work, thus happily begun, was not superficial, but “Like a well of water springing up to everlasting life.” It was a *deep* work. So soon as she was made a subject of pardoning mercy, she gave “diligence to make her calling and election sure.” She “pressed towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus,” and her advancement in grace was evident to her Christian friends. However, she was sometimes subject to a spiritual instability, and did not enjoy that evenness of temper and disposition which adults in religion experience, until about seven or eight years before her departure; when she experienced the sanctifying grace of God.—This happy change was very perceivable in her frame of mind, life, and conversation. It produced in her its natural effects, meekness, long-suffering, gentleness, and goodness; together with all those sacred enjoyments attendant on such a state of Christian experience. I do not know that ever she doubted her sanctification; but I am satisfied she enjoyed it on her sick-bed; and for several years before her dissolution, she had constant communion with the heavenly Trinity.

From such an intercourse with God, it is natural to suppose she attained to a degree of *stability* not to be found among superficial professors of religion. Such professors may enjoy the comforts of religion in some lucid intervals; but we too frequently see them influenced by the passions, while reason and judgment seem to be dethroned; and a degree of self-confidence, like that of the sanguine disciple's, when he said, “*Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee,*” forms a prominent feature of their professions. Such characters, like Peter, are easily shaken in mind, and their comforts, like their devotions, are transient. What the subject of these memoirs enjoyed, was the result of serious investigation, honest self-examination, frequent and fervent prayer, and self-denial—a uniform at-

tention to these important duties, produced in her, an abiding conviction of her dependence on divine grace ; together with a habitual sense of the divine favour.

The means of religion are appointed by divine authority, and when properly attended to, they will be blest to the soul ; and when this is the case, there will be a delight in the use of them. This was the case with Mrs. Peaco—she did not perform the ceremonies of religion merely from a sense of duty, but from the delight she felt in them, and a personal knowledge of their happy effects on her heart and practice : hence she attended the *preaching* of the word of God, on all occasions when practicable—This was food to her soul. She often sat under the word bathed in tears, while expressions of joy beamed in her countenance. She told me once, after hearing a discourse on the dispensations of providence towards believers, that the subject was peculiarly suited to her state, and that it was one of the most comforting seasons she had experienced for a long time. *Prayer* was also the delight of her soul.—In family devotion the divine presence often animated her—but in the closet in converse with God, she generally prayed as though He was present to bless.—Her frequency in this exercise proved how much she delighted in it, and how often divine consolations and strength were ministered there.

Give attendance to reading, is an apostolical injunction—There is much propriety in it—Without reading and meditation it is not probable that Christians will become deeply acquainted with their own hearts, with the wiles of Satan, or with divine and spiritual consolations. Neither is it very probable that those who are in the habit of neglecting this duty, will ever be steadfast and immovable Christians—nay, often from this neglect we may date the backslidings of professors of religion. Our friend felt the force of this sentiment, and therefore read and reflected. Although her reading was not general, nor her studies profound ; yet they were by no means superficial.—In her reading she did not make choice of those pernicious works, novels and romances, which uniformly poison the mind, and adulterate all the finer feelings of the soul :—she preferred the Book of God.—This she read and studied ; and it became a “ Light to her feet and a lamp to her path,” to illuminate her through this inhospitable valley of tears ;—Authors who treated on experimental

and practical piety were often consulted; and her mind was thereby informed on the leading doctrines of the gospel.

Thus, while too many others in these days of corruption, folly and vanity, neglect the improvement and proper cultivation of the mind, and attend almost entirely to that part which is the sister of corruption, and must soon become food for reptiles under ground; she cultivated the mind and improved the rational faculties.

The advantages of christian fellowship, and social intercourse with those "that feared the Lord, and spake often one to the other," were prized and much improved by her to her happiness. With her companions in tribulation, she would sympathise; and there they often mutually enjoyed with her, the richest communications of grace. From instituted and casual meetings of this kind, she often retired with renewed strength and holy triumph.

Trials and temptations are common to us in this state: for "*the servant is not above his Lord*:" it may be supposed she had her share—and hers was no common portion. "The waves and billows" often ran high, and threatened to overwhelm her with instant ruin, and to annihilate her fairest prospects. But even in such circumstances, the winds and waves were made subservient to the spiritual advancement of her soul: and He that once calmed the boisterous Tiberias, and brought the vessel to land, preserved her in the storm, and did not permit the unruly elements to harm her. These painful ordeals were a school to her, and hence she often found matter to comfort the distressed and desponding disciples of Jesus in similar circumstances. Some here now recollect her salutary instructions, and reflect with thankfulness, how she poured the balm of comfort into their tempted and sorrowful minds.

So far, her religious experience agrees with the word of God, and the experience of many others in the church militant. Indeed, we identify the Christian religion throughout the world by the same happy effects it produces on the mind and in the life—by the same hopes and prospects it produces—by the same comforts and joys it inspires, and by the same supports it affords in trials—the same Spirit is the agent of all: and the same gospel is the foundation of all—That religion which is so consonant with the gospel, and which produces such happy effects, must necessarily render all its subjects more or less *triumphant*.

Thus we behold the apostle Paul, in the privations and toils of a laborious ministry, rejoicing in its supports in such language, "sorrowful yet always rejoicing : cast down but not forsaken," and "in every thing giving thanks"—This was his support in the approach of death ; for when on the confines of the eternal world, exposed to the relentless fury of a sanguine persecutor, and under sentence of death, his fearless and heroic soul could say, "I have fought the good fight," "to me, to die is gain."—Our sister had this religion, and experienced its supports in life and in death, and it often constrained her to triumph in the midst of sufferings. She had not the unfeeling philosophy of the stoic : nor the dry and insipid religion of the formalist, that only renders its subjects frigid and inanimate in devotion ; but that which warms the heart with fire from the heavenly altar. In the means of religion, and in the trials and comforts of life she could triumph in a sense of the presence of the Most High.

But the bed of affliction and the chamber of death are proper places to look for the triumphs of true believers—Here is no disguise ; but all is real. During her last afflictions the divine consolations were largely manifested : her room was often like a paradise to her own soul, and to those present. Those who visited the chamber of affliction before her system was too much reduced, beheld with admiration, the joy that animated her mind, and heard with deep sensation the language of heaven drop from her dying lips. Praise, honour, and glory ! glory ! were the constant subjects of her song : she declared with delight and gratitude what God had done, was still doing, and the prospect of eternal pleasures that opened to her vision : several times I had the gratification to hear her praise her Saviour in the most lively and melting strains. One morning, several weeks before her death, she being very low, and not expected to continue long in this vale of tears, I entered her room, when I found her in converse with heaven.—Two female friends were present—we conversed with her on her enjoyments and prospects—her happy soul was instantly fired, and with tears of holy joy she exclaimed in such a sweet, heavenly manner as affected us all, "Eternity ! Eternity ! I shall soon be there.—There I shall see my precious Saviour who bled for me—I shall see my tender babes, I was so reluctant to part with—I shall see the ministers I so often heard preach with delight—Glory ! Glory ! Glory !—How good the Lord is to me !—why is he so good to unworthy

me?"—This happy frame of mind was not transient, but constant, except when nature was too much exhausted with pain and fatigue.

The last weeks, and especially the last few days of her life, were spent in the most excruciating sufferings—but she was calm, patient, and often triumphant. On the Monday morning preceding her departure, when death seemed to approach rapidly, she appeared to have the last conflict with the enemy—She immediately sent for her companion, and asked him to minister some comfort in this awful struggle. The cloud soon broke, and her usual serenity returned. From that time there was a constant calm—the four last days of her life her intellect became somewhat impaired, and the system was too much worn down to exercise the faculty of speech; but notwithstanding this, she would at intervals admire redeeming grace. In answer to the last question I had an opportunity of asking her, which was about twenty-four hours before her death, she evinced the firmness of her faith and the complete triumph of grace—When I asked, "have you any doubts?" she distinctly replied, "*none at all*"—this sentence she was scarcely able to articulate.—Some hours before she expired, she was heard to say, "*It is indescribable*:" meaning, probably, the consolations she enjoyed.

After struggling in the agonies of death for a number of hours, she silently breathed out her soul into the arms of her Saviour, on Thursday evening, the 24th of July, 1817.

MISCELLANEOUS.

DIRECTIONS TO MINISTERS.

READ and study the Scriptures especially, wherein is the best learning, and only infallible truth.

Meddle with controversies and doubtful points as little as may be in your popular preaching, lest you puzzle your hearers, or engage them in wrangling disputations, and so hinder their conversion, which is the main design of preaching.

Insist most on those points that tend to effect sound belief, sincere love to God, repentance for sin, and that may persuade to holiness of life.

Get your hearts sincerely affected with the things you persuade others to embrace, that so you may preach *experimentally*, and your hearers perceive that you are in good earnest.

Study and consider well the subjects on which you intend to preach, before you come into the pulpit, and then words will readily offer themselves; yet think what you are about to say, before you speak, avoiding all uncouth, phantastical words, or phrases, or nauseous, indecent, or ridiculous expressions, which will quickly bring preaching into contempt.

But, above all, you must never forget to order your own conversation as becomes the gospel, that so you may teach by example as well as precept.

OBITUARY.

ACCOUNT OF ELIJAH R. SABIN.

Died, in Augusta, Georgia, on the 3d May, 1818, Elijah R. Sabin, minister of the Gospel. He was received on trial as an itinerant preacher in the Methodist Connexion in 1799, and was an acceptable and useful member of the New-England Conference till 1812, when through increasing infirmities he found himself unable to endure the toils and privations of travelling, and received a location. On receiving this relation he removed from Boston to Hamden, on the Penobscot-River, where he resided till the autumn of 1817; when his health, rapidly declining, he was advised by physicians to try the effect of a southern climate. In conformity with this advice he left his family, and by moderate stages proceeded to Charleston, S. C. and from thence to Augusta, where, after lingering a number of weeks, under the influence of a fatal consumption, he finished his mortal course in the triumphs of faith.

The following letter from the Preacher in that charge will be satisfactory to his numerous friends, and will witness to all how a christian can die.

Augusta, May 5, 1818.

DEAR BROTHER,

Thinking it probable that either yourself or Bishop Roberts will attend the New-England Conference, I think it proper to send you some account of the death of our dearly beloved brother Elijah R. Sabin, who last sabbath morning took his flight from this, to a world of spirits. He came here about the latter end of January last, during the sitting of our Conference in this city. His health had been on the decline for some time, and upon his first arrival here the weather was cold and rainy, so as to confine him almost entirely to his apartment. It was hoped that when the weather should grow more pleasant, his health might be restored; but in this we were disappointed. He continued to grow weaker and weaker till it became evident that no human means would ever restore him. For a while he indulged the hope of recovering and again returning to his family; but finding his disorder increase he gave up all hopes of life, and calmly resigned himself and family to the Divine Will. In a letter that I

wrote for him to brother John Clark of Boston, he sent a particular message to all the preachers in that station, that they should more than ever preach the doctrine of holiness. - On Sabbath morning the 26th April, I found him much weaker in body than formerly. He requested me to ask the prayers of the Church in his behalf, that he might be more abundantly filled with the fulness of God. On Monday afternoon he observed that he had a calm confidence in God, but not such a sense of the Divine fullness as he wished. In the mean time his bodily strength was so far exhausted that he could scarcely speak above a whisper: about sun-set he obtained an uncommon manifestation of Divine love. He broke out in praising God in such a manner as astonished all around him: his strength of voice was increased so as to be heard all over the house. He called upon us all to help him praise God, and sent for some more of the brethren to come and see the happy state of his mind. This, said he, is worth praying for. One of his expressions was, "*If this be dying, it is very pleasant dying.*" To a number of us who stood round his bed-side he said, he would not exchange his situation for the healthiest among us. Sometimes he would hold up his hands and say he could see the angels and hear them singing, and that he could see the crown of glory reached out to him. He continued in these transports of joy for three hours or more; his pains then became violent, and we all thought that his end was fast approaching. He seemed himself to be in raptures of joy at the thought of a speedy departure; but finding his pains subside, he seemed disappointed, and said, he hoped to have been in heaven. Next morning he asked the time of day, and being told it was half past eight o'clock, he said he hoped to be in heaven by twelve. His life however was prolonged a few days more. He afterwards observed that possibly he was too anxious to be gone, and that it was best calmly to wait the

event of the Divine Will. His weakness continued to increase, and sometimes he had sharp pains, but not a murmuring word escaped him. On Saturday night he slept tolerably well till about half past one o'clock: he then waked up with a spell of coughing, which threatened immediate suffocation. About daylight he breathed easier; but his end visibly approached. Feeling himself drawing very near to eternity, he was heard to say, "O the pain the bliss of dying!" and then in a few minutes, his happy spirit took its flight to that rest that remains for the people of God. A few days before his death he gave me some account of his life and labours in the ministry. He observed that he firmly believed the doctrines of the gospel as held by the Methodists; that he often delighted to preach the doctrine of holiness, and that he hoped to die in the firm persuasion that the blood of Christ alone, cleanseth us from all sin. I think we may safely say that he died a witness of perfect love.

S. DUNWODY.

The following is an extract of a letter which the deceased wrote to the N. E. Conference through the medium of Bishop George, dated Augusta, Georgia, April 4, 1813.

"SAY to my brethren in Conference, I firmly believe I shall die a Methodist, whether I die in Georgia or Maine, i. e. a firm believer in gospel doctrines, in possession of a sound Christian experience, a lover and bearer of its fruits: or if you choose, a bible Christian; for methodism I perceive, gloriously accords with this excellent book.

"I have had great trials and struggles since I left New-England, but as yet Satan has not taken my confidence, a good hope through grace has borne me up through all; yet at times with all the energies of faith and prayer I could put forth, my head was but just above the water. Thanks to God, he has not suffered me to sink; but caused me to triumph in the riches of his

infinite mercy. O how sweet is the love of God in the midst of affliction! O brethren, come magnify the Lord with me, come let us exalt his name together! God has been pleased of late to lead my mind into a state of divine composure and calmness; by which, in some good degree, I feel my will sunk into his, and am more and more disposed to resign all into his hands, even for life or death. The cry of my heart has been for a number of weeks, even in the night watches, Lord make me holy! sanctify me wholly! fill me with thy perfect love! I often repeat with delight,

‘I, even I, shall see his face,
I shall be holy here.’

“Such was my situation by spasms in the stomach, for several hours, that I thought seriously of going suddenly into the presence of my Judge; but was not terrified—peace had its residence in the soul. Forever praised be the name of our God! I’ll praise him while he lends me breath!

For some weeks before my sickness began, I found an increasing desire for inward and practical holiness, and preached it with more warmth and frequency than for some time before.—And since my sickness it has been my chief desire for recovery, that I might be restored to this heavenly grace and have it mingled with all my prayers, conversation and preaching. It is about thirteen years since God, I trust, gave me this unspeakable gift; but through yielding to trials uncommonly severe, lost the witness by degrees; yet at times felt the holy fire for seve-

ral years, nor did I ever entirely lose a sense of it; but alas! to my shame and sorrow, I preached, prayed, and conversed concerning it, much less, and with a sort of languor hitherto unknown. But I cannot rest here: I cannot, and by the grace of God I will not; that whether I live or die, I may be a shining witness of this glorious truth.

For nine or ten years, I think, I have seen a sensible decline of the experience and preaching of this important doctrine in the N. E. Conference; the consequence is, many backslidings, much lukewarmness, and stupidity or triumph among the wicked. I believe that a just remark by Mr. Wesley, ‘Where the work of sanctification goes on among believers, the work of God usually goes on in all its branches.’ O brethren! is it not time to seize on the prey? In this thing be of one mind. Never rest till you are made witnesses of perfect love. For how can you preach it, with holy energy, to others if you have it not in your own hearts? Preach it to every believer, press it in conversation; I do not mean controversially; but otherwise—experimentally, practically,—explain, encourage, enforce. Few preachers, have a gift for controversy; such as have not, injure the cause they attempt to defend. Those who can controvert doctrines with ability, love and meekness, let them do it. I leave these lines as my best and perhaps my last pledge of love, addressed to my Fathers and Brethren of the N. E. Conference.

E. R. SABIN.